

CRISIS IN CORK: Hurlers vow not to play under Gerald McCarthy



Irish Examiner



CRECHES UNCOVERED



DON'T MISS TOMORROW: Inspection reports from 2,000 premises nationwide



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Irish Examiner **SPECIAL INVESTIGATION**

'SHOCKING AND DEPLORABLE'

■ Revealed: Complaints to HSE over creche incidents ■ Claims include neglect, abuse and broken bones

by Claire O'Sullivan and Catherine Shanahan

A THREE-YEAR-OLD boy walked out of the front door of his creche, crossed a busy road and was found playing in his front garden by his mother 15 minutes later.

The frightening incident was just one of a litany of complaints filed by parents about creches their children attend.

In one incident, two preschool children were picked up by a passer-by as they walked along a main road. It later emerged the internal doors and the front door were left open. The children had left unnoticed.

In another case, a 22-month-old child was sent home following a "minor fall".

It later emerged she had a fractured skull. Further investigation found another child had been withdrawn from the service after 19 accidents/incidents.

One creche was threatened with legal proceedings after the HSE found a catalogue of neglect when following up on a complaint. It emerged children spent long periods strapped into high chairs, staff ratios were being ignored and the creche was operating without insurance for a number of years.

The creche has since been shut down.

The disturbing complaints made by parents to the Health Service Executive during the period from October 2006 to October 2007 were released to the Irish Examiner under the Freedom of Information Act.

The most serious include:

■ Children left without supervision for up to 40 minutes while creche staff were away from the building. The parent said she believed this was happening regularly.

■ A girl was left outside a school gate for 20 minutes after the creche forgot to pick her up.

■ Two-year-old fell off a slide in a playground and fractured upper left arm. No one from the creche contacted the family.

■ A child with a skin ailment was asked to leave the creche. The creche defended its action saying the child's skin was shedding a lot and they had difficulty vacuuming it up and stopping other children eating skin flakes.

■ Babies strapped to highchairs for long periods with little or no interaction.

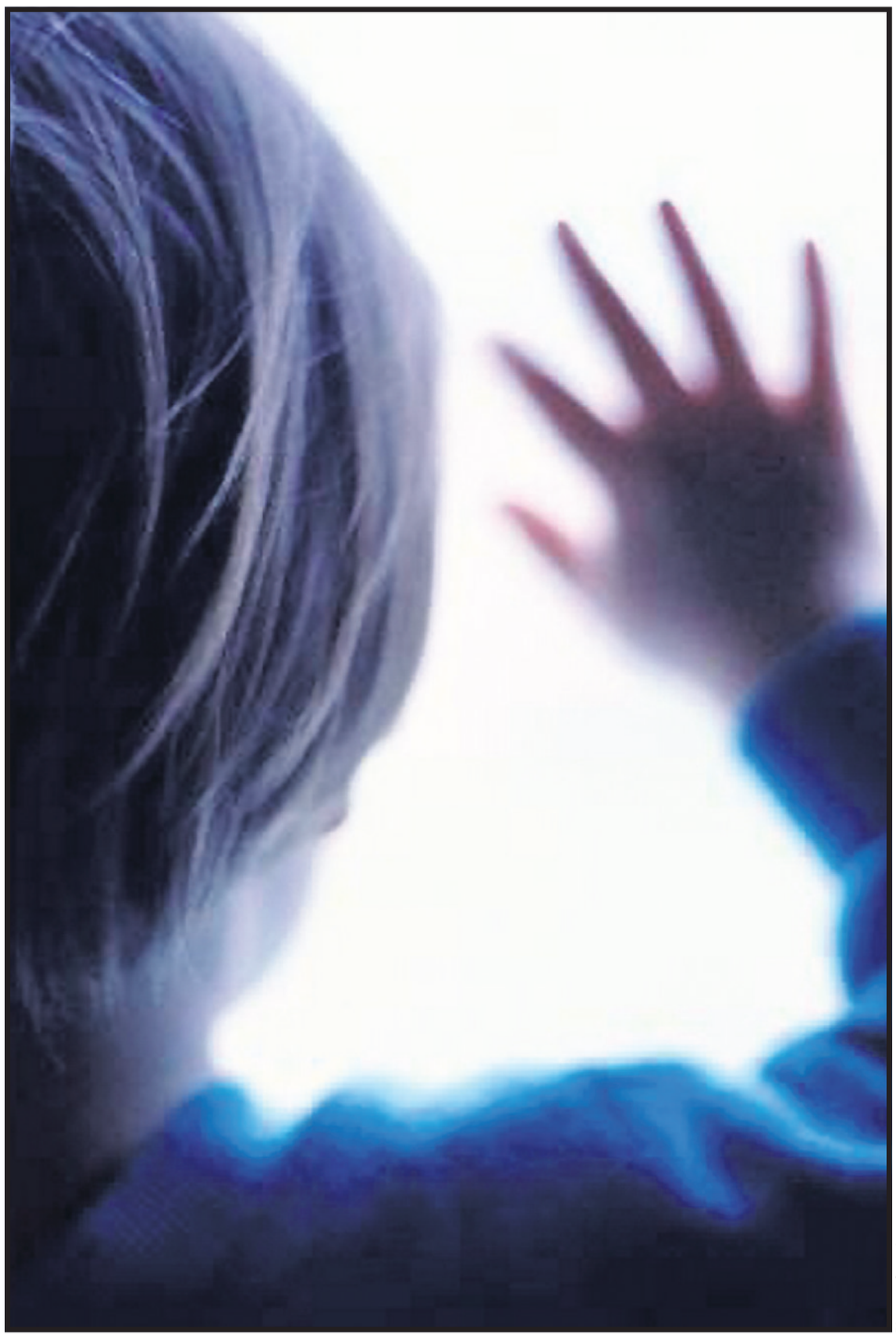
■ Child being constantly bitten. A follow-up HSE inspection warned the creche owner to take action because there was a "biting epidemic in your school".

Yesterday, HSE specialist in children and families Aidan Waterstone said regulations came into force in the childcare sector last year and these allow a "more comprehensive and robust" quality framework.

They also said new quality standards have been developed for the sector. "This will increase confidence as it will improve the quality of services to young children and will contribute to their development as children in later years."

Meanwhile, Barnardos' director of advocacy Norah Gibbons said parents and creche providers must realise that bad quality childcare will have a detrimental effect on a child.

"It's our constant mantra: quality of childcare is crucial and by that I mean loving care and good interaction with the child. Health and safety is vital too when you are looking after large numbers of small children. To ensure both of these, training should be mandatory," she said.



Picture: Getty Images

COMPLAINTS

■ Family not contacted after girl fractured arm.

■ Child sent home after 'minor fall' found to have fractured skull.

■ Two preschoolers left creche unnoticed and were picked up by a passerby on a main road.

■ Children left alone when staff went out for lunch.

■ Children left in a 'gated area' alone as punishment.

■ Child who was crying for its mother left alone in room until stopped sobbing.

■ Mother watched creche on webcam and found 'absolutely' no interaction between staff and children unless it was mealtime or nappy changing time.

■ Creche operating without insurance for four years.

■ Parent found her child left in a room on her own while the front door was open.

■ Creche staff could speak little or no English.

INSIDE

■ Shocking complaints, from aggressive staff to fractured skulls. **NEWS: 8-10**

■ Parents hold responsibility for ensuring their children are cared for properly. **EDITORIAL: 16**

■ Claire O'Sullivan examines some of the most common complaints Irish parents make about the quality of their children's care. **ANALYSIS: 17**

Rebels hit by a fresh strike threat

by Diarmuid O'Flynn



EXCLUSIVE

CORK GAA was once more locked in crisis, with All-Ireland winning skipper Ben O'Connor confirming the entire senior squad will not play under Gerald McCarthy.

And O'Connor, Cork's only All-Star in 2008, claimed that younger players received unwelcome phone calls advising them to return to the panel or "it wouldn't look good for them for the future".

In an exclusive Irish Examiner interview, the Cork legend blasted the county board for instigating the second massive stand-off to have hit the Rebels this year.

He issued a stark warning to McCarthy and the county board: "This panel are ready to go the whole distance, we're ready to pull out, tell them to work away next year.

"If there's a new management team after that, and if we're wanted back again, then no bother, but as it stands, we're having nothing to do with the current set-up.

"People tell us that we should be honoured to play for Cork — it's not an honour to play for Cork, it's an honour to win for Cork, that's my argument. It's no good us going up and down to Páirc Uí Chaoimh three or four times a week if we're not winning, or at least giving ourselves the best chance of winning.

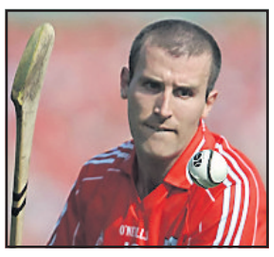
"After what we've experienced for the last two years, we feel we need change to get back to Croke Park again."

The Newtownshandrum man revealed: "Last week, some of our younger panel members got phone calls. It was done in a 'nicey-nicey way' but they were told they would want to be looking out for themselves and for their inter-county careers.

"They were told if they didn't come back to training, or back to the panel, it wouldn't look good for them for the future.

"It was only the younger panel members got those phone calls — I didn't get one, neither did Joe Deane, Timmy McCarthy or any of those lads. It was all the younger lads — I don't think that's on."

SPORT: 23



Ben O'Connor: Entire Cork squad may quit.

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FEATURES
Scary prices

Life-size vibrating monsters at €750 a pop, glow-in-the-dark T-shirts and €90 cauldrons complete with fog-makers — it's a long way from the hollowed-out turnips and dark tales of the traditional Irish Hallow'een. **Page: 19**

NEWS
Class sizes

Education Minister Batt O'Keeffe admitted the level of teaching delivered to students will be affected by class size increases forced by the budget — but insisted there is no going back on the decision. **Page: 6**



WORLD
Neo-Nazi plot

Two neo-Nazi skinheads accused of plotting to kill presidential candidate Barack Obama and dozens of black children did not appear to have any formal assassination plan, the US Secret Service said. **Page: 15**

Property bad debts to cost banks billions in profits

by Conor Keane
Business Editor

BAD property bets, leading to bad banking debts, are expected to wipe billions off the profits of Ireland's banks over the next year.

Banks that annually pumped out billion euro-plus profits are set to see profits fall dramatically, with pre-tax profits at Bank of Ireland expected to plunge from a forecast €1.99 billion this year to a paltry €37 million by early 2010.

The lost profits will make it almost impossible for banks to pass on expected ECB interest rate cuts, of up to 1.25%, to mortgage holders and businesses.

Share prices have already been punished with the value of Irish financial stocks losing more that €35bn in the last 12 months alone.

Yesterday, stockbrokers Merrion Capital updated their profit projections for the main Irish banks.

Analyst Sebastian Orsi forecasts that AIB's pre-tax profits will hit just over €2bn this year but will fall to just €144m in 2009, as a result of writing-off bad debts of €2.7bn next year, as banks take account of the property slump.

Mr Orsi expects pre-tax profits of €1.99bn at Bank of Ireland this year to fall to €1.2bn in 2009 and just €37m in 2010. He forecasts a bad debt provision of €2bn in 2010 at the bank.

At Anglo Irish Bank, Mr Orsi expects a bad debt provision of €1.6bn in 2009 to push anticipated pre-tax profits of €1.4bn in 2008 to €225m in 2009.

Irish Life and Permanent's pre-tax profits are expected to fall this year to €254m from the €461m in 2007.

BUSINESS: 21

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